

# Kitchen fire safety



Businesses where cooking is part of their trade are at greater risk of fire than other types of retailers and service providers.

Fires in kitchens usually happen during working hours with very little warning and they can spread rapidly – business owners and their employees need to be prepared. Kitchens are vital for such businesses, so fires can disrupt the entire enterprise while threatening the lives of customers, guests and employees.

The most common cause of commercial kitchen fires is overheating what is being cooked. This generally happens because staff become distracted, using unsafe high temperatures, or because of broken thermostats.

### Key actions to prevent kitchen fires and consequential damage

- Make sure all health and safety risk assessments, including one for fire, are completed and that affected employees are made aware of the hazards identified, the control measures decided upon, and the procedures they need to follow.
- Check that all workers have received the training they need to work safely.
  - Record the training that you provide and support it by providing safe system of work (SSOW) documents that set out procedures to be followed for potentially hazardous tasks.
- Don't allow cooking equipment to be left unattended while it's in use
- Have regular fire drills and written emergency procedures.
  - Unless the kitchen already has an emergency shut-off button (to turn off gas and/or electrical supplies), ensure all employees know where these can be safely turned off in the event of a fire. Display a sign in the kitchen that gives this information.

- Locate kitchens in rooms with fire-resisting construction, wherever possible. Ideally, passive fire protection measures should provide at least 60 minutes' fire-resistance (or longer, if required under Building Regulations for your circumstances).
- Install fire-resistant ductwork that is either LPCB or FIRAS certified, if possible. Make sure there is at least 50mm between combustible materials and extraction ducting.
- Make sure kitchen equipment has enough space around it to be properly maintained and cleaned.
- Consider installing grease filtration systems that meet the requirements of LPS 1263 and/or replacing mesh-type grease-trap filters with flame barrier baffle type filters.
- Make sure grease and fume-extraction hoods, canopies, traps and grease-filters are being cleaned at least weekly. Also the fume-extraction system needs servicing at least every 12 months and deep-cleaned at least once every six months by a specialist contractor (or more frequently, if recommended by the contractor). Keep records of this work.
- Make sure to have your kitchen and cooking equipment regularly inspected and maintained by a competent person.
  - Ensure these periodic checks include vital items like thermostats and temperature controls.
- Change the cooking oil in deep-fat fryers regularly. Use guidance from your suppliers (including any discolouration charts) to help you with this.
- Put a documented system in place for periodic inspections, testing and maintenance of your electrical appliances. Check that the fixed electrical installation has been inspected and tested by a competent electrical contractor (e.g. NICEIC-approved or ECA member) as prescribed in BS 7671, within the last five years.
- Ask the contractors involved in installing, maintaining or inspecting your kitchen equipment and ventilation systems to confirm they operate at current industry standards. These standards, along with details of specialists, are on the Building Engineering Services Association (BESA; formerly the HVCA) website.
- Protect cooking and extraction equipment (including any associated extraction ductwork and hoods inside the building) by having an extinguishing system installed, in line with (or the equivalent of) LPS 1223. The system should include a local alarm, automatic activation by a detection system and manual activation – located a safe distance away from the cooking equipment, preferably by a fire escape route door.
- Provide a BS EN 1869:2019 compliant fire blanket, and an adequate number of fire extinguishers that comply with BS EN 3 (parts 1-6) and carry a BAFE or LPCB approval mark. At least one must be appropriate for use on electrical fires, and one for deep-fat fryers (Class F).